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AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all previous versions and listings of claims in the Application:

1. (Currently Amended) An Internet implemented A-method for providing information ~~on~~ about a plurality of users to a plurality of requestors ~~over the Internet~~, the method comprising:

storing information ~~on~~ about the plurality of users in a database located on a cookie management system and associating ~~the information~~ about the plurality of users with a plurality of keys;

receiving a request at the cookie management system for information ~~on~~ about a particular user of the plurality of users from a requestor over the Internet;

receiving a key associated with the request at the cookie management system from the requestor over the Internet, wherein the key associated with the request is included in a cookie on a machine of the particular user;

using the key associated with the request to retrieve ~~the information~~ on about the particular user from the database; and

forwarding ~~the information~~ on about the particular user to the requestor over the Internet;

wherein the requestor determines whether the cookie exists on the ~~user-machine~~ of the particular user, and wherein in response to determining that the cookie does exist on the machine of the particular user, the requestor directly obtains information about the particular user, and in response to determining that the cookie does not exist on the machine of the particular user, the requestor indirectly:

obtains ~~the information~~ on about the particular user;

generates and stores the cookie including the key on the ~~user-machine~~ of the particular user; and

provides the key and the information ~~on~~ about the particular user to the cookie management system.

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2. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein storing information comprises associating a different key for information ~~on~~about each user.

3. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein storing information comprises storing multiple sets of information for at least some of the users with each set of information being associated with a different key.

4. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising checking that the requestor is authorized to obtain the information ~~on~~about ~~that the~~ particular user.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein forwarding comprises sending the information in XML format.

7. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising receiving new information ~~on~~about the user from the requestor and updating the database with the new information.

8. (~~Original~~Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising selecting an available key for a user and supplying the new key to a requestor so that the requestor can store the new key as a ~~the~~ cookie on a ~~user's~~ the machine of the particular user.

9. (Currently Amended) An Internet implemented A-method of obtaining information ~~on~~about a userusers, the method comprising:

receiving at a requestor website a request over the Internet from a ~~user's~~ user machine;

retrieving, in a retrieving operation, a cookie including a key from the ~~user's~~ user machine, ~~the wherein the~~ retrieving operation includes ~~including determining by~~ the requestor website ~~determining whether the cookie exists on the ~~user's~~ user machine, and wherein in~~ response to determining that the cookie does exist on the user machine, the requestor website directly obtains information about the user;

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in response to the requestor website determining that the cookie does not exist on the user machine, the requestor website indirectly:

obtaining information about a user at the user's-user machine;

generating and storing the cookie including the key on the user's-user machine;

and

providing ~~the information~~ about the user and the key to a cookie management system;

obtaining the key included in the cookie;

sending a query over the Internet from the requestor website to the cookie management system for data associated with the key; and

receiving ~~the a set of~~ data associated with the key, wherein ~~the the set of~~ data associated with the key includes ~~the information~~ about the user.

10. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein receiving the set of data comprises receiving the set of data in XML format.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising using ~~the data on~~ about the user in responding to the user's request over the Internet from the user machine.

13. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein retrieving the cookie ~~comprises~~ includes retrieving a plurality of cookies from the user's-user machine.

14. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising receiving a request from a second user's-user machine, checking for ~~a cookie~~ cookies on the second user's-user machine, sending a query for an available key when the second user's-user

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machine does not contain any ~~cookie~~cookies, and placing ~~the~~a second cookie with the available key on the second ~~user's~~user machine.

15. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising obtaining new information ~~on~~about the user and sending the new information and the key over the Internet.

16. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~An Internet implemented system for storing information ~~on~~about a plurality of users and for providing the information about the plurality of users to a plurality of requestors, the system comprising:

a database for storing information ~~on~~about the plurality of users and for associating the information about the plurality of users with a plurality of keys;

a cookie management system for receiving a request over the Internet from a requestor for a set of information on~~about~~ a particular user of the plurality of users, the request including a key stored as part of a cookie on a machine of the particular user, wherein the machine of the particular user is a computer connected to the Internet; and

a retrieval unit for receiving the key and for retrieving the information about the particular user associated with ~~that~~the key;

wherein the cookie management system obtains the set of information about the particular user from the retrieval unit and forwards the information ~~on~~about the particular user to the requestor, and

wherein the requestor determines whether the cookie exists on the ~~user~~machine of the particular user, and wherein in response to determining that the cookie does exist on the machine of the particular user, the requestor directly obtains the set of information about the particular user, and in response to determining that the cookie does not exist on the machine of the particular user, the requestor indirectly:

obtains the set of information on~~about~~ the particular user; then the requestor

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generates and stores the cookie including the key on the user-machine of the particular user; and

provides the key and the set of information ~~on~~ about the particular user to the cookie management system.

17. (Currently Amended) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising a key assignor for assigning, in the database, available keys to new users ~~in the database~~.

18. (Currently Amended) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising an update unit for storing new information on about users in the database.

19. (Currently Amended) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising a verifier for verifying that the requestor is authorized to receive the set of information ~~on~~ about the particular user.

20. (Currently Amended) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the cookie management system forwards the set of information ~~on~~ about the particular user to the requestor in XML format.

21. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein associating the information about the plurality of users with a ~~the~~ plurality of keys includes associating the information about the plurality of users with the plurality of keys according to one of different categories ~~or and different~~ levels of the information on about the particular user and the method further comprises:

receiving a plurality of user-supplied passwords, each user-supplied password of the plurality of user-supplied passwords corresponding to each key of the plurality of keys; and

using only the each user-supplied password corresponding to each key of the plurality of keys passwords to retrieve the information on about the particular user from the database, wherein the each user-supplied passwords ~~password correspond~~ password corresponds to an amount and type of ~~the information~~ about the particular user that the particular user wants to ~~to~~ the requestor to have.

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22. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising:

associating information ~~on~~about the user with a plurality of ~~the~~cookies according to one of different categories ~~or~~and different levels of data ~~on~~about the user;

receiving a plurality of user-supplied passwords, wherein each user-password of the plurality of user-supplied passwords corresponds ~~corresponding to~~ each cookie of the plurality of cookies; and

receiving ~~the data information~~ about the user associated with ~~the each~~ user-supplied ~~passwords~~password, wherein ~~the each~~ user-supplied ~~passwords~~password ~~correspond~~ corresponds to an amount and type of ~~the information~~ that the user wants ~~to the requestor~~ to have.

23. (Currently Amended) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the database associates the set of information about the plurality of users with the plurality of keys according to one of different categories ~~or~~and different levels of the information ~~on~~about the particular user;

wherein the cookie management system further receives a plurality of user-supplied passwords, wherein each user-supplied password of the plurality of user-supplied passwords corresponds ~~corresponding to~~ each key of the plurality of keys; and

wherein the retrieval unit receives only ~~the user-supplied passwords~~ which are used by the requestor to retrieve the set of information about the particular user associated with ~~the each~~ user-supplied ~~passwords~~password, and wherein ~~the each~~ user-supplied ~~password of the plurality of user-supplied passwords~~ ~~corresponded~~corresponds to an amount and type of the set of information about the particular user that the particular user wants ~~to the requestor~~ to have.

24. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the requestor provides ~~the information on~~about the particular user to the cookie management system after writing the cookie on the ~~user machine~~ of the particular user so that ~~the information about the particular user~~ is stored in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the ~~user machine~~ of the particular user.

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25. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein providing ~~at the requester the information en-about~~ the user to the cookie management system comprises providing ~~the information en-about the users~~user to the cookie management system after writing the ~~cookies-cookie en-to the user's-user~~ machine so that ~~the information about the user~~ is stored in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the ~~user's-user~~ machine.

26. (Currently Amended) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the requestor provides ~~the information en-about the particular~~ user to the cookie management system after writing the cookie ~~en-to the user-machine of the particular user~~ so that ~~the information about the particular user~~ is stored in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the ~~user-machine of the particular user~~.